CITY OF WHITEHORSE

Whitehorse
Disability Policy and Action Plan 2012 – 2016

Enhancing Inclusion and Access to the Whitehorse Community

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Executive Summary

People with a disability and/or mental illness are valued members of the Whitehorse community, with the same rights and responsibilities as all other community members. Whitehorse City Council recognises, however, that people with a disability and/or mental illness continue to experience barriers that may prevent the full realisation of their rights as equal members of the community.

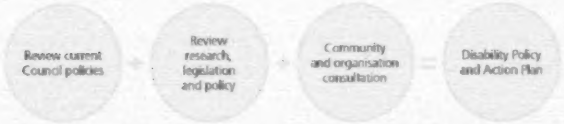
The Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan 2012–2016 (the Plan) will assist Council to understand the aspirations, interests and needs of people with disability who are working, living, learning, taking part in recreational activities or visiting the municipality.

In developing this Plan Council wanted to achieve the following:

- To understand and be directed by the interests, aspirations and needs of people with a disability, their families and supporters who live, work, learn, participate in recreational activities and visit the City of Whitehorse.
- Explore current federal and state legislation and policy directions that influence current resourcing of services and supports for people with a disability.
- Ensure all of Council involvement in the development and implementation of the Plan. This will ensure a whole of Council approach to building an inclusive City of Whitehorse.

It should be noted that much of what sits within the "disability realm" falls outside of local government's direct responsibility. In these instances, local governments work to achieve the best outcomes for the community through strong advocacy and leadership. Community organisations and businesses have both direct and indirect responsibilities to address barriers that discriminate against people with a disability, their families and carers.

To achieve this Council followed the following process:


Review current Council policies
Review research, legislation and policy
Community and organisation consultation
Disability Policy and Action Plan

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a strategic framework that will help guide Council's actions across the organisation, in the community, in partnership with key stakeholders and as an advocate for the rights of people with a disability and/or mental illness.

Through community consultation, review of current research, legislation and policy directions as well as demographic information, Council has identified the following five priority areas:

- Changing attitudes
- Social connectedness
- Information and communication
- Accessible built environments
- Employment, training and volunteering

These priority areas will be the focus of work undertaken by Council and in partnership with disability and community organisations over the next four years.

Introduction

People with a disability are active and vibrant members of the Whitehorse community who make significant economic and social contributions to the local area. The aspirations and interests of people with a disability are not dissimilar to the needs of all people in the Whitehorse community. People with a disability also want to participate in local sporting, recreational, religious and cultural activities, learn, work and feel a sense of belonging.

Despite the presence of anti discrimination legislation and the extensive work undertaken to date across all levels of government people with a disability continue to experience barriers to participating in community life. People with a disability and/or mental illness are more likely than other people in the Australian community to experience:

- Relatively poor health
- Lower levels of participation in education, training and employment
- Social exclusion
- Lack of access to goods, services and facilities
- Ongoing discrimination (Commonwealth of Australia 2011)

Whitehorse City Council has legislative obligation to work towards addressing these barriers, thereby promoting the right of people with a disability to participate in community life as equal and valued members of society.

It should be noted that much of what sits within the "disability realm" falls outside of local government's direct responsibility. In these instances, local governments work to achieve the best outcomes for the community through strong advocacy and leadership. Advocacy and leadership do not only apply to other levels of government, but also to the many organisations and businesses that have direct and indirect responsibility to people with a disability, their families and carers.

The Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan outlines Council's commitment to people with a disability and provides a strategic framework to guide Council's work over the next four years.

The Plan enables Council to most effectively use its influence and resources within Council and in the broader community as well through interactions with state and national governments to ensure that people with a disability are seen as equal, valued members of the community. Council's approach is depicted in the following diagram.

Council's Approach

Organisational Level
Council demonstrates leadership in the development of policies, strategic plans, projects and initiatives that promote and advocate for the rights of people with a disability and/or mental illness and their families as equal members of the community.

Community Level
Council advocates on behalf of people with a disability and their families and carers. Council works in partnership disability service providers, mental health service providers, community service organisations and local businesses to promote the inclusion of people with a disability and mental illness in all aspects of community life.

State and National Level
Council works with all levels of government and utilises its influence to advocate for the rights of people with a disability and or mental illness with these levels of government.

Defining Disability

Whitehorse City Council recognises that the onset of disability can occur at anytime; prior to or at birth, as the result of accident, injury, chronic illness, or trauma, during childhood, adulthood or through older age. Further, Council recognises that a diverse range of social, environmental, biological and psychological factors can impact on an individual's mental health, which can result in the person experiencing a psychiatric disability.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) is the key Australian legislation promoting the rights of people with a disability and seeks to eliminate discrimination. The DDA defines "disability" in relation to a person as:

a) Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
b) Total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
c) The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
d) The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
e) The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
f) A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
g) A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:
h) Presently exists; or
i) Previously existed but no longer exists; or
j) May exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
k) Is imputed to a person
l) To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Convention) recognises that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments (UN Convention).

Emerging from England during the 1980s and 1990s the social model of disability primarily aims to promote the equality of people with a disability. The social model argues that the way in which society is structured differentially includes and excludes particular groups in society, creating divisions between individuals along the way (Oliver, 2004). Reflecting on the interactions between the person with a disability and the community in which they live found that irrespective of disability type the social, built, natural and economic environments of a community can be further disabling. Changing the way a community is structured can provide increased opportunities for people from participating in the life of the community. Some examples to consider include:

- Where community events are held in parks or buildings without wheelchair access prevents people who use wheelchairs from attending – people are excluded or disabled.
- People who are deaf may wish to attend an event but if there is no hearing loop or interpreter present- people are excluded or disabled.

Adopting the social model of disability this Plan will not focus on specific disability types. Disability throughout this Plan will therefore reflect the broadest range of disabilities, including mental illness. Furthermore it will seek to address the structural barriers present in the community and promote the full inclusion and participation of people with a disability in our municipality.

Why Develop this Plan?

Council has an important role in designing and developing the type of environments social, built, economic and natural that support and enhance health and wellbeing for all people in the Whitehorse community. Under the *Victorian Local Government Act 1989* councils have a responsibility to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community and to ensure that services and facilities provided by Council are accessible and equitable. Addressing issues of discrimination and improving access and inclusion for all community members, including people with a disability, falls within these responsibilities.

Local governments works to achieve the best outcomes for the community through advocacy, decision making and action. In doing so, councils:

- Promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district;
- Ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and services are provided in accordance with the best value principles to best meet the needs of the local community;
- Improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community;
- Promote appropriate business and employment opportunities;
- Ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable;
- Ensure the equitable imposition of rates and charges;
- Ensure transparency and accountability in Council decision making.

The DDA 1992 and *Victorian Disability Act 2006* outline Council's legislative obligations to develop a Disability Policy and Action Plan.

The DDA 1992 identifies that policies and programs need to be developed to identify and reduce discrimination experienced by people with a disability. These should include clear goals and targets as well as identifying responsibility for implementation and evaluation.

The *Victorian Disability Act 2006* requires all public bodies including local government to develop a Disability Action Plan which identifies the following four key areas that must be addressed within the Plan.

(a) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;

(b) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;

(c) Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;

(d) Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

Councils are required to report outcomes relating to these key areas in their Annual Report.

The History of Whitehorse Disability Action Plans

The first Whitehorse City Council Disability Policy and Action Plan commenced in 2000. Further Disability Policy and Action Plans were developed for the 2004-2006 and 2008-2011 periods.

Each Plan was developed in line with the prevailing knowledge, legislation and policy directions of the time. Actions undertaken and outcomes achieved have continued to be built upon in regards to Council's knowledge of barriers to participation, issues, priorities and subsequently, how Council responds to meet community expectations.

A snapshot of outcomes from each of the previous Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plans are highlighted in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: Snapshot of Outcomes from previous Disability Policy and Action Plans

2000 – 2002

- Disability awareness, inclusion and access begining to be addressed in Council policy and programs
- TTY (telephone typewriter) introduced to Council Customer Services
- Mobility map developed
- Compliance to *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* appear on external contracts
- Continuous path of travel along the building line introduced into Community Laws.

2004 – 2006

- Rebranded "Inclusion Support Program" continues to support children with a disability in federally funded childcare settings
- "Strong Body Strong Mind" program commences at Aqualink
- MetroAccess Development Officer position commences
- Administration of the Disabled Persons Parking Scheme
- Whitehorse Disability Awareness project presented in local primary schools
- Tactile ground surface indicators installed at 18 bus stops
- Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee established
- Disability awareness training undertaken by Council staff

2008 – 2011

- Whitehorse Accommodation Forum – Options for People with a Disability held November 2010
- Young people engaged in Youth Connexions programs: Girls with Attitude, Box Hill Homework Group
- Victoria Rose Sensory Garden completed
- Projects undertaken with local disability service providers to link people with a disability to community activities and services
- Encouraging Active Lifestyles for People with a Disability Research Project undertaken
- Festival of Sport held June 2011
- Safety and access audits regularly conducted on Council facilities, playgrounds and open spaces
- Disability and Mental Health Awareness training offered through Council training calendar
- Continued facilitation of the Disability Advisory Committee

Whitehorse Demographics
Disability and Mental Health

Although disability is prevalent in Australia, finding comprehensive demographic information in relation to people with a disability and or mental illness at the local government area is difficult.

The information presented in this section aims to provide a general overview of statistical and demographic information and make some assumptions from state and federal statistical reports relating the City of Whitehorse.

Whitehorse Information

The City of Whitehorse is described as being an inner or middle metropolitan municipality. Its eastern boundary is 12kms from the City of Melbourne. It is estimated that 157,740 people live in the City of Whitehorse (ID, 2012). These population predictions are used consistently across Council for planning purposes and are based on forecasting undertaken by ID Consulting. ID forecasts are developed following each Census report and consider migration rates, fertility rates, death rates, trends in household size and additional dwellings.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Index of Relative Socio Economic Disadvantage report identifies the City of Whitehorse as a municipality with low disadvantage. This rating looks at the level of disadvantage represented by high levels of unemployment, low income households, people with little training and unskilled occupations in a community or area. This rating reflects the average across the municipality but hides pockets of disadvantage that are present within the municipality.

Low income measured by reliance on Centrelink payments is one way to explore economic disadvantage. Centrelink data is based on federal election boundaries; the City of Whitehorse is located within the Aston, Chisholm and Deakin electorates. Centrelink data indicates that across the three federal electorates there are approximately 10,291 people in receipt of a disability support pension; 30,688 people in receipt of the aged pension; and 7580 people in receipt of a carer allowance. Over a third of disability support pension recipients (34.1 per cent have been in receipt of either a disability support pension or another income support payment for more than 15 years (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, September 2011).

Further general demographic information can be viewed on Whitehorse City Council website – www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au.

Prevalence of Disability

The ABS defines disability as any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months. Disability, through the Census, is measured through the self report of people requiring assistance with activities of daily living such as self care, mobility and communication. This definition influences the following findings:

1.

Between April and December 2009, the ABS conducted the "Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers" (SDAC) to collect information about three population groups; people with a disability; older people (aged 60+) and people who provide assistance to older people and people with a disability.

The SDAC found that four million people in Australia (18.5 per cent) reported having a disability. A further 21 per cent of Australians undertaking the survey reported a long- term health condition that did not restrict their everyday activities (ABS, 2009). This data is not broken down into local government areas however, when applying the general percentage of 18.5 per cent to Whitehorse estimated population of 157,740 residents (ID, 2012), approximately 29,182 people living in the municipality may report having a disability.

2.

The City of Whitehorse has a culturally diverse population with 33.4 per cent of people born overseas. With approximately 7.5 per cent of people being born in China (ABS, 2012). Census information indicates that most people who reported requiring assistance with daily living were born in Australia (59.4 per cent). In addition, people who also reported came from the following countries China (5.5 per cent), Greece (4.9 per cent), Italy (4.0 per cent), England (3 per cent) and Vietnam (1.3 per cent) (ABS, 2012). It is difficult to utilise country of birth data when estimating the prevalence of disability as if a person has a disability based on the DDA definition, but does not require assistance with daily living, they may not be captured as having a disability in Census data. Further immigrant populations often have lower death and hospitalisation rates, as well as lower rates of disability and lifestyle related risk factors. This in part can be explained by the fact that most migrants are partly selected on the basis of their health and, for some, their relatively high socioeconomic status (ABS, 2011d).

3.

The rate of disability increases with age. Reports of disability were less prevalent in children under four (1 per cent) than for people aged between in the older aged groups 85-89 years (36.9 per cent), 90-94 years (55.3 per cent) and people aged over 95 years (74.9 per cent) (Census, 2012). Similarly 56 per cent of people who receive the Disability Support Pension through Centrelink are aged over 50 years (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, June 2011). The presence of a higher than average older population in Whitehorse coupled with the increased prevalence of disability with age has implications for planning resources as well as Council and community service provision.

4.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) explored the prevalence of multiple disabilities and the need for assistance. This report utilised data from the 2003 SDAC (ABS, 2004) and found that just over half (51 per cent) of all people who reported a disability had two or more disabilities. Multiple disabilities in childhood were mostly associated with intellectual disability. For people aged between 25 -64 years those with multiple disabilities had physical and psychiatric disabilities in combination with another type of disability. Multiple disabilities present in the lives of people aged over 64 years were most commonly associated with physical and sensory/speech disabilities. Ensuring people with a disability have access to services and supports that meet their individual aspirations and needs, continues to be the focus of government policy.

Prevalence of Mental Illness

Almost half of all Australians (45 per cent) will experience a mental illness at some time in their life and one in five Australians will experience a mental illness every year (ABS, 2008). The experience of mental illness is different for each person. Some people experience one or two episodes of mental illness, where for others episodes can be more frequent. The duration of mental health episodes also vary as does the recovery journey, the process of a person regaining their sense of personal meaning, hope and living a meaningful life.

Applying the statistics to Whitehorse population data we can make the following assumptions: Of the 157,740 people estimated to live in Whitehorse (ID: 2012) approximately 70,983 people will experience a mental illness at some time in their life. Each year 31,548 people living in Whitehorse will experience a mental illness. Generally mental illness is separated into two main categories:

- Depression and anxiety disorders:
  This category includes depression anxiety disorders (ie: phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders) and eating disorders. These are the most prevalent reported disorders.
- Psychotic disorders
  This category includes schizophrenia and bipolar disorders.

Psychotic disorders (3 per cent) are less prevalent than depression (15 per cent) and anxiety disorders (26 per cent). However, due to the nature of the symptoms psychotic disorders generally have a more disabling impact on the person's life (Department of Human Services, 2009).

Some mental health conditions arise in response to life events and environments and are therefore are more amenable to prevention, while others are more organic in origin. Good mental health is seen as a critical element of our overall health and wellbeing at every stage of life (Department of Human Services, 2009). Taking a health promotion approach enables Council to raise awareness of mental illness and to work in partnership with community organisations to promote the inclusion of people with mental illness in community life.

People with another form of disability can also experience mental illness. International studies have found that people with an intellectual disability are three to five times more likely to experience mental illness than the general population. It is estimated that there are some 14,000 Victorians with both intellectual disability and mental health problems and that over 10 per cent of specialist mental health service clients are also clients of disability services (Department of Human Services, 2009). Research indicates that people with an acquired brain injury are more likely than other disability groups to have co-occurring mental health problems, problematic substance use and physical health conditions. Recognition is one of the major barriers facing people who experience disability and mental health problems. The lack of recognition prevents support and access to services (Department of Human Services, 2009).

The prevalence and complex nature of mental illness has implications for Council as an employer, service provider and in relation to ensuring people with a mental illness can participate in community life. Council will continue to raise awareness of mental illness and promote available services and supports to its employees and to the broader community.

Carers in Whitehorse

The *Carers Recognition Act 2010* defines a carer as:
An individual who provides personal care, support and assistance to another individual who needs it because that other individual:

a) Has a disability; or
b) Has a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness); or
c) Has a mental illness; or
d) Is frail and aged.

The 2011 Census identified that in Whitehorse, approximately 14,163 people aged 15+ reported providing unpaid care for a person with a disability, long term illness or old age, this equates to 11.3 per cent of the total Whitehorse population. Women were more likely to be the care provider across all age groups, other than the 80+ age group. People aged 45 – 59 years reported the highest level of care provision which may reflect caring for their own children as well as for older parents. Service access and the provision of information are critical to supporting the valued role of carers in the Whitehorse community.

Education and Employment

The connection between education levels and employment opportunities is well established. People with a disability are more likely to leave school prior to Year 12 than people without a disability (22 per cent -11 per cent respectively). Further, people with mental illness or nervous conditions are more likely than other people with other disabilities or long term health conditions to have left school prior to completing Year 12 and less likely to be undertaking further education (ABS, 2011a).

People with disabilities have lower levels of education than people without a disability. The disparity between educational outcomes for people with a disability and those without becomes more apparent when qualifications are considered:

- Where people with a disability had attained a degree or higher, 81 per cent were employed compared to 86 per cent of those without a disability.
- Where people with a disability had completed Year 12, 55 per cent were employed compared with 81 per cent of people without a disability
- Where people had not completed Year 12; only 37 per cent of people with a disability were employed compared to 75 per cent of those without a disability.
- People with a disability who commenced a certificate course are also less likely to complete the course – 13 per cent compared to 2 per cent of people without a disability. (ABS, 2011a)

Being employed provides social and economic outcomes for people with a disability, generally enabling greater participation in the life of the community. Employment contributes to physical and mental health, personal wellbeing and a sense of identity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). Despite the presence of anti-discrimination legislation people with a disability are still less likely to be working than other Australians.

The labour force participation rate in 2009, for those aged 15-64 years with disability was 54 per cent, considerably lower than those without disability (83 per cent). Generally, labour force participation decreases as the severity of disability increases. In 2009, people with a moderate or mild disability had a participation rate of 53 per cent while those with a profound or severe disability had a participation rate of 31 per cent. This pattern was evident across all types of disability (ABS, 2012).

Many people with a disability who want to work confront a number of barriers including, poorly coordinated support, inadequate education and training opportunities, community attitudes and fear of losing eligibility to crucial benefits that offset the cost of disability (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Access to transport and childcare are also barriers to employment (ABS, 2012).

Submissions to the National Disability Strategy Consultation Report identified employer knowledge and attitude as the biggest barrier to employment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Misconceptions about the cost of workplace modifications and the supports people with a disability require in the workplace were frequently noted. In fact workplace modifications are not always required and can often be achieved with minimal outlay from the business or organisation. There are a range of financial incentives available to support the employment of people with a disability. Greater promotion of the services and supports available to people with a disability seeking employment as well as those available to employers is needed.

Council will continue to work to address barriers to workforce participation in its endeavours as an employer and as a leader in the community.

Service Provision in Whitehorse

To increase participation in the life of the community some people with a disability may require additional support and or access to specialist services. Other people with a disability may not be directly linked to specialist services; however, may work, study or undertake sporting or recreational activities within the municipality.

People with a disability access services that best meet their needs, which often results in people travelling between municipalities to attain these services.

A wide range of specialist disability services and supports operate within the City of Whitehorse, Council also offers a range of services to people with a disability and mental illness. A summary of service type is listed in Diagram 2.

Despite the presence of services Council's research and consultation information indicates that people with a disability and their families often have difficulty accessing information about services and supports; information is difficult to find; and websites are difficult to navigate. Specialist services were reported to be at capacity, or in the case of respite services, having long or closed waiting lists. Families also reported difficulty accessing general services for their child with a disability, such as childcare, holiday programs and sport and recreation activities.

Council will continue to advocate, through federal and state government departments and politicians in partnership with disability and community service providers for initiatives that meet the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers in the municipality.

The presence of such a broad range of services means that the City of Whitehorse is a destination for people with a disability and also increases the onus on Council to respond to the needs of people with a disability in the community.

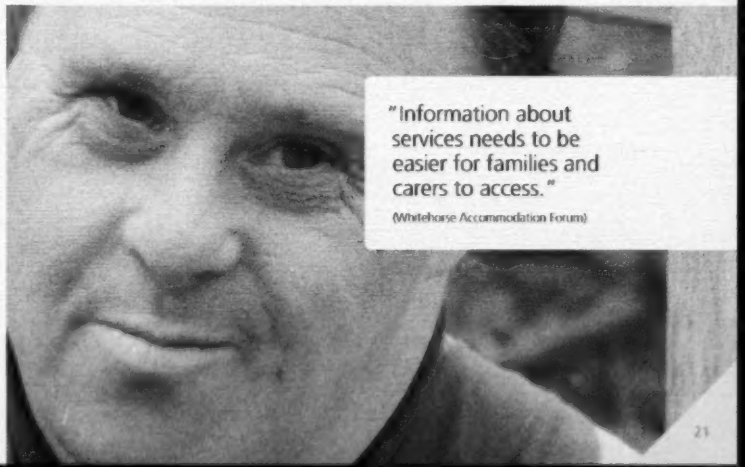


Diagram 2:
A summary of Disability Services in Whitehorse

Disability Services

27 Funded Specialist Service Providers

- Accommodation – approximately 64 shared supported accommodation facilities each providing accomodation for four to six people
- Respite services – facility, community and home based options
- Day services – approximately 350 people access the four day services across Whitehorse
- Personal care services
- Case management
- Individual planning

Early Intervention Services

- Six early intervention services that provide a range of allied health services and playgroups for young children

Education

- Children with a disability attend mainstream primary and secondary schools in the municipality and may require support through various DEECD inclusion initiatives.
- Three specialist schools are located within Whitehorse with an additonal four schools in neighbouring communities
- Students with disabilities attend both TAFE and Deakin University.

Employment

- In addtion to the Job Network providers there are seven disability employment services based in the municipality
- An Australian Business Enterprise also operates in Nunawading

Mental Health Services Public and Private

- Clinical and consultancy services
- Public area mental health services – including case management, early intervention and secondary consultation
- Youth Specific Services
- Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (PDRSS) including individual outreach, day programs, residential rehabilitation
- Volunteer programs that provide social connections

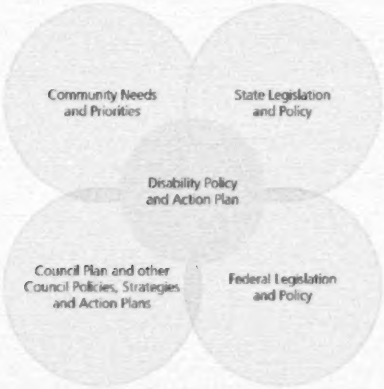
Council Services

- Home care
- Personal care
- Respite care
- Delivered meals
- Centre based meals
- Home maintenance
- Transport services
- Planned Activity Group and Social Support
- Inclusion Support Program
- Maternal child health services

Legislative Context

Legislation and policy directions frame the way in which services and supports are planned for, developed, delivered and can be utilised by people with a disability. While Council is responsive to needs of the local community, it also has obligations to be responsive to federal and state legislation and policies. The interaction of influences on this Plan is depicted in Diagram 3.

Diagram 3: Influences on this Plan


Community Needs and Priorities
State Legislation and Policy
Disability Policy and Action Plan
Council Plan and other Council Policies, Strategies and Action Plans
Federal Legislation and Policy

There are a range of key state and federal legislative and policy documents that have been considered in the development of this Plan, these are depicted in Diagram 4. Legislation such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, *Victorian Disability Act 2006* and policy such as the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* continues to strengthen Australia's ongoing commitment to ensure the inclusion of people with a disability in community life. Council shares the rights based approach of the federal and state governments aiming to develop an inclusive Australian society.

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, outlines the basic human rights of all people in Victoria. The twenty fundamental rights contained in the legislation promote and protect the freedom, respect, equality and dignity of all people in Victoria.

The Charter requires that all levels of governments and other public authorities comply with these rights and consider the relevant human rights contained in the legislation when developing laws, policies and when making decisions.

Diagram 4: Snapshot of legislation and policies informing this Plan

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Australia became a signatory in 2008

National

Legislation
Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Standards
Disability Education Standards (under review)
Australian Building Codes – Access to Premises Standards 2010

Policies
National Disability Strategy 2010-2020
National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy 2009
Fourth National Mental Health Plan 2009-2014

Victoria

Legislation
Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995
Victorian Disability Act 2006
Victorian Mental Health Act 1986 (under review)
Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Victorian Local Government Act 1989

Policies
Victorian Autism State Plan 2009-2019
Victorian State Disability Plan 2002 -2012 (under review)

Municipal Association of Victoria

Policies
Creating a more inclusive community for people with a disability – A Strategic Framework for Local Government – Municipal Association of Victoria 2011

National Disability Strategy

The development of the National Disability Strategy 2010 -2020 (NDS) is the first time in Australia's history when all governments; federal; state and local have committed to a united, national approach to improving the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers, as well as providing leadership for a community wide shift in attitudes.

Each level of government has specific roles and responsibilities across the range of policies and programs that impact on people with a disability, their families and carers. The purpose of the NDS is to establish a high level policy framework to give coherence and guide government activity across mainstream and disability specific areas of public policy. The six policy areas covered in the NDS are:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities
2. Rights protection, justice and legislation
3. Economic security
4. Personal and community support
5. Learning skills
6. Health and wellbeing

The NDS reflects the principles and intent of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is expected that the following principles contained in the NDS are reflected and reinforced in all policies and practices developed across all levels of government (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

Involvement of people with a disability – the views of people with a disability are central to the design, funding, delivery and evaluation of policies, programs and services which impact on them, with appropriate support and adjustment for participation.

Community engagement
A whole of community change effort is required to remove barriers and support inclusion of people with disability in the life of their communities.

Universal approach
Products, services, environments and communities are accessible and usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for specialised modification.

Life course approach
Takes into account a person's likely needs and aspirations over their lifetime, paying particular attention to milestones and times of transitions.

Person-centred
Policies, programs and services for people with a disability are designed to respond to the needs and wishes of each individual.

Independent living
The provision of services and equipment that facilitate the greatest level of independence and the enjoyment of a lifestyle that reflects the choices of people with disability.

Interconnectivity
Governments work together to ensure interconnectivity of policies and programs.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

For some time the federal government has supported the development of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Like Medicare, a NDIS will ensure Australians with a disability have access to the services they need to participate in society, no matter where they live or how they acquired the disability. It will operate on insurance principles and give people with disability greater control and choice over the services they receive; for example, via individualised funding.

The operational details and impact on Council service provision are not known at this stage. Council will continue to monitor the continuing development and pilots of the NDIS to ensure the effective and efficient use of Council's resources and services.

Victorian State Disability Plan

The framework of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013 –2016 supports the Victorian Government to:

- Uphold the rights of people with a disability
- Remove and prevent structural, systemic and attitudinal barriers to participation
- Build a welcoming community
- Give the individual choice and control over their supports and services
- Enable people with a disability, their families and carers to get the right mix of services and supports

The vision of "an inclusive Victorian society that enables people with a disability, their families and carers to fulfil their potential as equal citizens" is underpinned by the following six principles.

- Fairness
- Opportunity
- Choice
- Self-determination
- Simplicity
- Sustainability

The Victorian State Disability Plan contains four interconnected goals:

1. A strong foundation in life

- Better opportunities in education and early childhood development services
- Improved housing and accommodation choices
- An improved response to lifelong health needs

2. Upholding rights and promoting participation

- Better protection of human rights
- Better pathways to employment
- Greater participation in the community

3. Accessing information, transport, buildings and places

- More transport options
- Improved access to buildings and places
- More accessible government information

4. A contemporary approach through disability system reform

- More opportunities for independence, choice and control
- Better targeted and integrated services
- The roles of families and carers is better supported

The Victorian Government has released a two-year implementation plan for 2013 and 2014 this will be followed by a further implementation plan for 2015 and 2016. Details of the actions to be undertaken can be viewed on the Department of Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Local Government

Municipal Association of Victoria Strategic Framework

The Municipal Association of Victoria is a peak body for Local Government. In response to the NDS the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has released a strategic framework for local government "Creating a more inclusive community for people with a disability".

Victorian councils have been working to increase the inclusiveness of their communities through progressively addressing a wide range of issues that limit equitable access, inclusion and opportunities for particular groups in local communities. While each council needs to be responsive to its local context, overall councils are bound by similar legislation, regulations and by a number of common community needs and expectations. In the area of improving access and inclusion individual councils are addressing many similar issues even if the detail of individual council responses sometimes varies.

Victorian councils will work in the following ways to continue to systematically improve access and inclusion for people with a disability and their families:

1. A whole-of-council approach
2. Incorporate access and inclusion objectives in key strategic documents
3. Facilitate civic participation and inclusive consultations
4. Systematically improve the accessibility of council building and infrastructure
5. Inclusive communication and information approaches
6. Accessible and inclusive council services and events
7. Strategic uses of statutory and regulatory roles
8. Improve employment opportunities
9. Influence community attitudes and perceptions
10. Exercise leadership in advocating to other organisations
11. Foster partnership and collaboration
12. Effective accountability practices
13. Reviewing and evaluating progress

Whitehorse City Council

The Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan is a key council social policy and strategic plan that aims to enhance the social built natural and economic environments that impact on the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers. The Plan aligns with the Whitehorse Council Plan and the Whitehorse Community Wellbeing Plan. It also links to and influences a range of other Council plans. Diagram 5 uses the environments of health to display the connection between this Plan and other Council policies, strategies and plans.

The Victorian State Disability Plan is currently being reviewed. A draft of the State Plan was released for public consultation in June 2012. The 2013-2016 Victorian State Disability Plan is required to operational by January 2013.

The framework for the Draft Victorian State Plan represents and integrated, holistic approach across government and the community that works to make mainstream services and more accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of people with a disability and builds on the strengths of the specialist service system. The vision of "an inclusive Victorian society that enables people with a disability, their families and carers to fulfil their potential as equal citizens is underpinned by the following six principles.

- Fairness
- Certainty
- Sustainability
- Simplicity
- Choice
- Self determination.

These principles will guide the work undertaken to make a real difference in the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers.

The following four outcome areas are provided to summarise the directions of the state in the coming four years.

1. A strong foundation for learning, jobs and health
   Access to and outcomes in education, jobs and health that enable people with a disability to lead full and rewarding lives
2. Protecting rights and promoting participation
   A community that promotes and protects the rights of people with a disability and actively supports their participation and engagement
3. Access to neighbourhoods, spaces, buildings and transport
   Planning and design of the physical environment and transport system that enables people with a disability to live work and move around
4. A contemporary approach through system reform and continued work towards a viable National Disability Insurance Scheme

   Disability supports that provide choice, control and opportunity and that complement the mainstream and facilitate the social and economic participation of people with a disability, families and carers

Council Plan 2011–2015

The Whitehorse Council Plan sets the direction for Council's work in the community, detailing how Council will allocate financial and non financial resources to deliver the Council Plan and all Council services. The Council Plan sets the following strategic objectives:

- Serve and strengthen our diverse community to be inclusive vibrant and engaged
- Promote, protect, enhance and respect the quality of our natural and built environments
- Deliver organisational excellence, visionary leadership and strong governance through dedicated people, to ensure the best possible contribution to our community
- Support a prosperous, diverse and healthy local economy that contributes to the wellbeing of our community

Whitehorse Community Wellbeing Plan 2009–2013

The Whitehorse Community Wellbeing Plan articulates how Council will enhance the health and wellbeing of the community across the social built economic and natural environments. The following six priority areas or pillars guide Council's work in this area:

- Family and friends
- Parks, open space and tracks
- Physical health
- Water and energy
- Community safety
- Food and nutrition

MetroAccess – Community Building Program

The Community Building Program is a partnership between local and state government to build inclusive communities within Victoria. The Community Building Program through the employment of a MetroAccess Officer aims to ensure that people with a disability are able to participate in the life of the community. The five main objectives guiding the work of MetroAccess Officers and the Community Building Program are:

1. To mobilise and support people with a disability to optimise participation in the life of the community
2. To build and strengthen the community's capacity to provide support to people with a disability and their families
3. To facilitate integrated local community planning and coordination which engages and involves people with a disability and their families, disability service providers and community organisations
4. To work with existing disability support providers to enhance their capacity to provide relevant and appropriate supports in the community
5. To improve access to information about relevant services and community activities available to people with a disability in their communities

Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee

The Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee commenced in 2004. The current Committee was appointed for the 2012-2016 period.

The Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee is an advisory committee to Council whose purpose is to:

- Provide Council with strategic advice regarding systemic, structural, cultural and social barriers impacting on the lives and opportunities available to people with a disability.
- Ensure that the Disability Action Plan remains reflective, responsive and relevant to both the community and Council.

The Disability Advisory Committee consists of up to 15 people who work, study, live and or have strong connection to the City of Whitehorse. At least one Councillor participates on the Committee. Membership of the Disability Advisory Committee represents a broad range of experiences and perspectives including:

- People with a disability
- Carers and family members of people with a disability
- Service provider representatives
- Community representatives

Diagram 4: Snapshot of legislation and policies informing this Plan

The Council Plan
Four year strategic plan

Community Wellbeing Plan
4 year plan for health and wellbeing, focusing on the environments for health

Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)
strategic plan for land use, built environment, air and water

Specific Strategic Plans

Many policies, strategies, and action plans exist across Council. The Disability Policy and Action Plan aligns with the Council Plan, Community Wellbeing Plan and MSS as well as influencing other Council policies, strategies and action plans.

The following list grouped under the environments for health attempts to capture a range of plans influenced by the Disability Policy and Action Plan however it is by no means a comprehensive listing.

Social
- Youth Plan
- Early Years Plan
- Volunteering and Civic Participation
- Arts Festivals and Events
- Diversity Policy and Action Plan
- Community Safety
- Positive Ageing Strategy
- Road Safety Strategy
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Action Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Recreation Strategy
- Disability Policy and Action Plan

Built
- Affordable Housing Policy
- Bicycle Strategy
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Traffic Management Strategy
- Road Management Plan
- Asset Management Framework
- Playspace Strategy

Natural
- Open Space Strategy
- Energy Action Pan
- Water Action Plan
- Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Sustainability Strategy
- Waste Management Plan

Economic
- Economic Development Strategy
- Footpath Trading Guidelines
- Community Grants

Consultation Process

Surveys and face-to-face consultations were carried out to ensure that people with a disability, their families and supporters, Councillors and Council staff could contribute to the development of this Plan. Opportunities for community members to participate were promoted through local media, Council's website and through various networks. Internal Council consultations also utilised the survey and workshop formats.

Surveys

A community survey (Appendix 1) was developed. The survey was available on Council's website from August to mid November 2011; hardcopies of the survey were made available through Council's customer service centres.

Council also developed a "Chatterbox" (Appendix 2) to promote disability awareness and to provide an opportunity for community members to complete the community survey. The "chatterbox" was handed out during Council's Spring Festival along with a hard copy of the community survey.

A total of 37 survey responses were received with most respondents being female (70 per cent) than male (30 per cent). As presented in Diagram 6 people responding to the survey were aged from 18 years to 80+ years with the majority of respondents being aged between 40 -69 years. To ensure this Plan reflects the needs of younger people specific links to Councils Early Years and Youth Plan will be documented in the actions.

People with a disability (32 per cent) were more likely to complete the online community survey than representatives from community organisations (23 per cent), disability services (18 per cent) and family members (17 per cent). This is displayed in Diagram 7.

Diagram 6
Respondents Age Groups

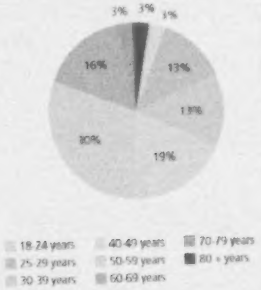
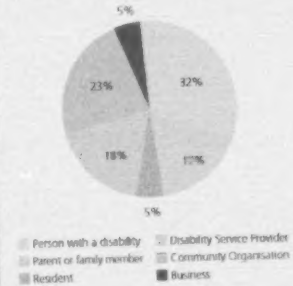


Diagram 7
People responding to the online survey



An internal Council survey (Appendix 3) was distributed to Councillors and Council Officers in October. In total 30 surveys were completed – six representing the views of a team of officers plus 24 individual responses.

Face-to-Face Forums

Acknowledging that people with a disability and their families may find it difficult to attend traditional community forums, Council organised to meet with people with a disability, their families and staff groups through local disability, mental health and community service providers.

Eleven face-to-face forums were held in disability, mental health and community service organisations between August and November 2011:

- Three meetings with people with a disability (35 people participated),
- One with parents (seven parents participated) and
- Seven with disability and mental health service provider staff (35 staff participated). Organisations represented provide a range of services including:
    - Adult day and accommodation services,
    - Community based psychosocial rehabilitation,
    - Volunteer,
    - Early childhood services,
    - Individualised planning,
    - Employment services

In addition 48 people participated in four workshops targeted to specific audiences held during October:

- People with a disability and their families (seven people participated)
- Disability service providers (13 people participated)
- Council officers (15 people participated)
- Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee (WDAC), including Cr Sharon Ellis, the Chair of the WDAC and two Council officers (12 people participated)

What did we learn?

People participating in the community consultation process consistently identified access to information and the lack of availability of services, programs and activities that meet the needs of children, young people and adults with disabilities and their families. The following list identifies the range of topics and themes that emerged from the surveys and during the face to face consultations:

- Changing community attitudes
- Reducing social isolation
- Access to Council and community services for children and young people as well as adults with a disability wishing to participate in local activities.
- Reducing waiting lists
- Supporting community organisations
- Promoting community opportunities
- Promoting Council services and supports
- Information available in accessible formats
- Raise awareness of the impact and issues facing people with a disability and/or mental illness
- Promoting compliance to building standards
- Continuing to ensure Council developments and redevelopments are compliant, accessible and meet the needs of people with a disability
- Increasing amenities available to people with a disability
- Working with local businesses to promote access
- Raising the profile of people with a disability as volunteers and employees
- Ensure parks, play spaces and open spaces are accessible to people with a disability

Priority Areas

To develop the Action Plan component of this Plan, Council consolidated information from the review of current research, legislation and policy directions, demographic information and most importantly the information gained through community consultation. This process enabled Council to identify the following five priority areas.

Changing attitudes
Council will promote the inherent dignity and respect for all people living in the Whitehorse community regardless of difference. Council will continue to raise awareness of the challenges facing people with a disability and/or mental illness, as well as building the capacity of its organisation and the broader community to be responsive to the needs of people with a disability.

Social Connectedness
Council will strive for equitable access and inclusion of people with a disability in all Council services, programs and activities that support people with a disability to participate in the life of the community. Council will work in partnership with local disability service providers, community organisations and businesses to build upon the social experiences and connections of people with a disability and their families within our communities. Where actions fall outside of the responsibility of Whitehorse City Council, we will advocate to relevant organisations, state and federal government departments on behalf of people with a disability, their families and carers.

Information and Communication
Council will continue to develop, promote and provide information that is accessible to people with a disability, facilitating opportunities and addressing any barriers that prevent people with a disability communicating with or receiving information from Council.

Accessible built environments
Council's commitment to planning for and improving access in the built environment will continue in relation to parks, signage, roads, footpaths, buildings and other facilities such as libraries and leisure centres that fall within Council's responsibility and sphere of influence.

Employment, training and volunteering
Council will continue to work to understand and address the barriers experienced by people with a disability accessing paid employment, training and volunteering opportunities in relation to opportunities available within Council and in the broader community context.

These priority areas will be the focus of the work undertaken by Council and in partnership with disability, community organisations and businesses over the next four years. To reflect and reinforce the principles contained in the National Disability Strategy Council will develop and implement projects, initiatives and services that embrace the following principles:

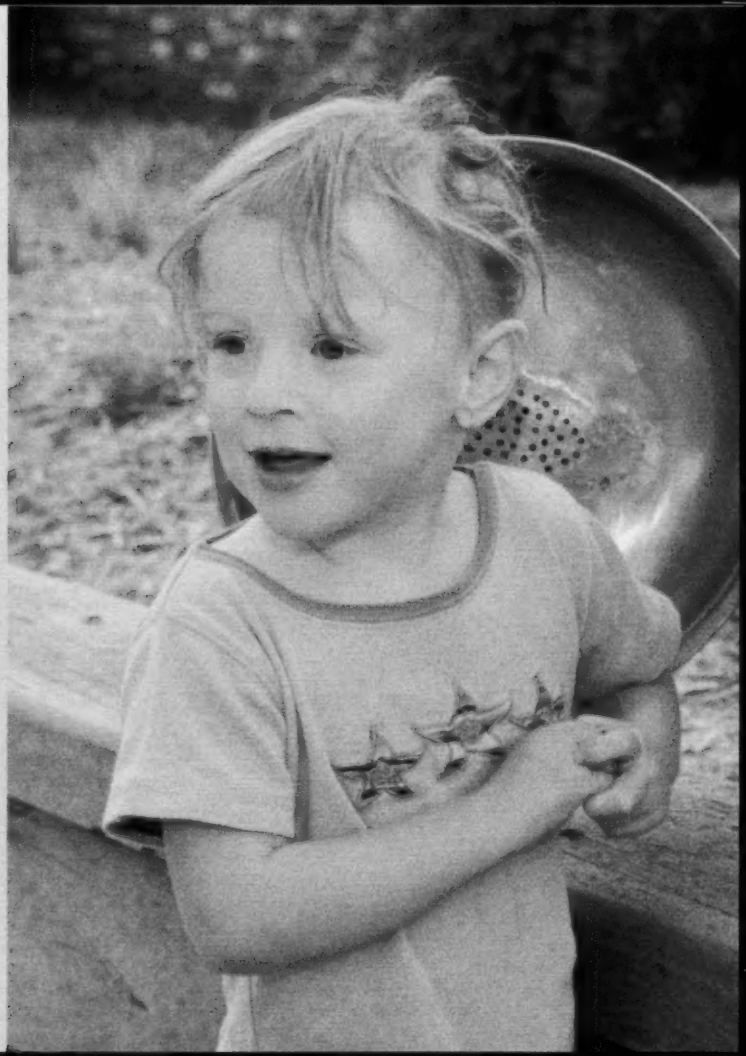
- Involvement of people with a disability
- Enhancing community engagement
- Promoting universal approach
- Focus on a life course approach
- Being person-centred
- Encouraging independent living
- Building interconnectivity

Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies objectives and strategies that will enable Council as an organisation and in partnership with key stakeholders to address the five priority areas over the four year period of the Plan.

This Plan identifies both new and continuing initiatives that build upon Council's vision to be an inclusive, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community.

It is intended that this Plan will be a living document which will ensure its continued relevance to the community, community based organisations and Council as well as legislative and policy contexts.



Priority Area
Changing Attitudes

Council will promote the inherent dignity and respect for all people living in our community regardless of difference. Council will continue to raise awareness of the challenges facing people with a disability and/or mental illness, as well as building the capacity of its organisation and the broader community to be responsive to the needs of people with a disability.

Objective	Strategy Actions	Current Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timeline	Anticipated Outcome
Raise awareness of the issues facing people with a disability and their families	Develop access and inclusion tip sheets for business and community groups that depict potential solutions to barriers to participation	Partner with Scope and Knox City Council to deliver the initiatives of the Business Inclusion Group Development of demographic fact sheet series	Community Development Business and Economic Development	Scope Knox City Council	2012	Business and community groups will be more aware of the barriers faced by people with a disability and their families Whole of community approach to reduce barriers to participation
	Work with disability and local community organisations to understand and address issues facing people with a disability, their families and carers	MetroAccess works in partnership with the Eastern Disability Services Network (EDSN) MetroAccess works with local disability service providers on a range of projects. Consult with Scope Business Advisory Service as part of design phase of Springfield Park Pavilion redevelopment Distribute revised Home and Community Care promotional materials to EDSN	Community Development Health and Family Services Arts and Recreation Development Home and Community Care	Eastern Disability Services Network (EDSN) Disability service providers Scope Business Advisory Service	Ongoing	Local area research will inform project and activity directions Community organisations and disability services will have greater knowledge of respective services People with a disability will have greater access to community opportunities
Develop the evidence base for social and environmental determinants of health and ensure it informs the development and implementation of policy and programs	Undertake social research that identifies the needs of people with a disability within our community	Investigate the needs of people with a disability from diverse backgrounds Research the interaction between local disability and domestic violence service providers.	Community Development	Disability and domestic violence service providers Migrant Information Centre	2013 onwards	Research will inform policy, program and activity development

Objective	Strategy Actions	Current Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timeline	Anticipated Outcome
Promote positive images and stories of people with a disability and their families	Promote and undertake activities that meet the aims of Mental Health Awareness Week	Reflect the goals of the Community Wellbeing Plan to promote mental wellbeing initiatives in the community	Community Development Arts and Recreation Development Organisation Development Communications	NEAMI Whitehorse Community Health Service Neighbourhood and Community Houses	October each year	Positive portrayal of people with a disability will be promoted in the community
	Promote and undertake activities that meet the aims of International Day of Persons with Disability	Use exhibition space at Box Hill Community Arts Centre to promote the artistic achievements of people with a disability	Community Development Arts and Recreation Development Organisation Development Communication	Disability Service Providers Neighbourhood and Community Houses	December each year	
	Council publications and media releases will continue to contain positive images of people with a disability	Continuous action	Communications All Departments	Eastern Disability Services Network Federal Government	Ongoing	
Monitor and address opportunities that arise from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	Promote information regarding the development and implementation of the NDIS to people with a disability, community organisations and throughout Council	In partnership with Eastern Disability Services Network host parent forums that promote understanding of the NDIS Attend conferences and seminars that explore and explain the NDIS	Community Development		2012 – then as needed	Council will be responsive to legislative and policy changes that impact on the lives of people with a disability

Priority Area
Social Connectedness

Council will strive for equitable access and inclusion of people with a disability in all Council services, programs and activities that support people with a disability to participate in the life of the community.

Council will work in partnership with local disability service providers, community organisations and businesses to build upon the social experiences and connections of people with a disability and their families within our communities. Where actions fall outside of the responsibility of Whitehorse City Council, we will advocate to relevant organisations, state and federal government departments on behalf of people with a disability, their families and carers.

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
People with a disability will be able to participate in sporting, recreational, social, religious and cultural activities within the community	In partnership with disability and community organisations identify and develop opportunities based on the needs and interests of people with a disability	MetroAccess works in partnership with the Easter Disability Services Network on a range of initiatives	Community Development	Eastern Disability Service Network Neighbourhood and community houses	Ongoing	Opportunities developed will meet the needs of people with a disability
	Utilise the findings of Encouraging Active Lifestyles for People with a Disability Project to engage people with a disability in local sporting clubs, organisations and events.	In partnership with Eastern Recreation Leisure Service (ERLS), Scope and Monash City Council host the annual Festival of Sport In partnership with ERLS and Sportlink develop the "Learn the Rules of Sport" initiative Promote local service needs and outcomes to through community and state government departments	Community Development	Eastern Recreation Leisure Service Disability Service Providers Monash City Council Scope	2012	People with a disability will have access to sporting opportunities as participants, spectators, organising staff and or volunteers
	Continue to support the Access All Abilities provider and disability service organisations to develop inclusive sport and physical activity opportunities	Continue Council representation on the Eastern Recreation Leisure Service Committee of Management	Community Development Arts and Recreation Development	Easer Recreation Leisure Service	Ongoing	
	Explore the role of people with a disability in multifaith communities and networks	Promote the Whitehorse Interfaith Network through disability service organisations Promote access and inclusion of people with a disability through the Interfaith Network via guest speaking opportunities	Community Development	Whitehorse Interfaith Network	2012 2013	People with a disability will have increased awareness of multifaith communities and networks
	Promote community cultural events to people with a disability and through disability service organisations	Ongoing promotion through networks	Community Development Communications Arts and Recreation Development	Disability service providers Community organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability will have increased opportunity to participate in and attend cultural events

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Promote safety in our community and develop strategies to reduce violence, against people with disabilities	Continue to provide a range of programs and activities to assist people to travel safely	Current programs to continue – Wiser Driver, Keeping Safe and Mobile, Child Restraint Fittings, School Travel Planning Walking School Bus, Transit, Fit to Drive, Looking After Our Mates, Travel Smart Maps	Engineering and Environmental Services	Disability service providers Local schools	Ongoing	People with a disability will feel safe when accessing the Whitehorse community
	Work in partnership with local community and disability services to understand people with a disability's perceptions of safety in the community	Continue to facilitate the Whitehorse Safety Network.	Community Development	Disability service providers Community organisations Neighbourhood and community houses	Ongoing	People with a disability will feel safe when accessing the Whitehorse community
	In partnership with disability and community organisations develop strategies and initiatives that reduce violence against women with disability	Undertake place based research to better understand the availability of services to support people with a disability who experience violence.	Community Development	Disability service providers Community organisations Neighbourhood and community houses	2107-2013	Women with disability who experience violence will have increased knowledge of services and supports available to them
Ensure that Council services and programs are developed and delivered in an inclusive and equitable manner	Through data collection including satisfaction surveys explore gaps services provided by Council	Client survey to be conducted to gauge satisfaction with services and identify gaps in services Where appropriate advocate to state and federal departments for additional services and or programs	Health and Family Services Home and Community Care		Ongoing	Children and young people with a disability will have equitable access to Council services
	Continue to provide respite services to families affected by autism Continue to support children and their families through the Inclusion Support Program	Explore the opportunity to develop and offer services and programs that meet the needs of children and young people with autism	Health and Family Services Home and Community Care	Autism Victoria	Ongoing	Children and young people with Autism will have access to services and supports that meet their needs Families will have access to services and supports that meet their needs.
	Continue to identify and address potential barriers to participation in Council services and programs	Form a cross Council project team to develop a program/service tool to identify potential barriers to participation	Community Development Health and Family Services Home and Community Care Arts and Recreation Development		2014	Council Officers will have greater awareness of barriers that limit the participation of people with a disability
	Explore the application of person and/or family centred planning within Council service streams	Staff training on person centred assessment and care planning for services and active support model (ASM) approached including related documentation	Community Development Health and Family Services Home and Community Care	Disability service providers	2013 – onwards	Services will be provided to meet the needs of families Council resources will be efficiently utilised
Council will utilise its knowledge and influence to advocate for the needs of people with a disability	Local research findings and knowledge will inform submissions, initiatives and projects that aim to increase the participation and inclusion of people with a disability.	Share local research findings with relevant federal and state departments to advocate for the needs of people with a disability Monitoring of submission and funding opportunities that enhance opportunities for people with a disability to participate in the community	Community Development	Disability service providers Community organisations Federal and state government departments	Ongoing	Evidence based practice will inform the development of initiatives and projects Council will continue to advocate for the needs of people with a disability based on local research and knowledge

Priority Area
Information and Communication

Council will continue to develop, promote and provide information that is accessible to people with a disability, facilitating opportunities and addressing any barriers that prevent people with a disability communicating with or receiving information from Council.

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Increase opportunities for people with a disability to participate in activities, festivals and events	Ensure information regarding local activities, events and festivals is promoted to people with a disability and through disability service and community organisations	Promotion occurs through network and internet based distribution lists	Communications Community Development Arts and Recreation Development	Disability service providers Community organisations Neighbourhood and community houses	Ongoing	People with a disability will have greater awareness of the range of events and opportunities available to them
	Ensure that access features such as hearing loops, accessible toilets and parking are included in Council events and promotional material	Development of a Festival and Events Guide. Development of performa for Council staff advertising events.	Arts and Recreation Development Communications Community Development		2012	People with a disability will have knowledge of the resources available to them
Increase peoples access to and participation in Councils planning and decision making	Continue to facilitate and support the development of the Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee	Continuing initiative	Community Development		Ongoing	People with a disability, their families and supporters actively participate in Council decision making processes
	Promote opportunities to participate on Council Advisory Committees to people with a disability and through disability service providers	Promotion occurs through network and internet based distribution lists.	Advisory Committee Facilitators	Disability service organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability are engaged in Council's committees, planning and decision making processes
	Develop community engagement strategies that enable people with a disability to contribute to Councils planning and decision making processes	Development of Council's Community Engagement Framework.	Community Development	Disability service organisations	2013	

CITY OF WHITEHORSE

Acknowledgement of Country
In the spirit of reconciliation, Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land now known as Whitehorse and pays respects to its elders past and present.

Contacting Council

Postal Address

Whitehorse City Council
Locked Bag 2
Nunawading DC VIC 3131

Phone: 9262 6333
Fax: 9262 6490
TTY: 9262 6325
(Service for deaf or hearing impaired people)

TIS: 131 450
(Telephone interpreter service. Call and ask to be connected to Whitehorse City Council).

Email
customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Website
www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Service Centres

Whitehorse Civic Centre
(main Service Centre)
379-397 Whitehorse Rd
Nunawading 3131

Box Hill Service Centre
Box Hill Town Hall
1022 Whitehorse Rd
Box Hill 3128

Forest Hill Service Centre
Level 2 (T275)
Forest Hill Chase Shopping Centre
Canterbury Road
Forest Hill 3131

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Publication No. 200213094

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Ensure information is available to people with a disability in accessible formats	Develop key Council documents in Easy English format –simple language supported by visual cues	Home and Community Care brochures will be translated into top four languages and Easy English and available on Council's website Development of Communication Boards for use in Council Customer Service area Development of cross Council working group to identify relevant documents Review of Rates Notices	Home and Community Care Community Development Customer Service Communications Property and Rates	Scope Disability service organisations	2013	People will have access to easy English information supported by visual cues People with a disability will have greater awareness of Council roles, responsibilities and services
	Promote the availability of Council documents in accessible formats including hard copy, Easy English and word documents	Promotion occurs through Council website and publications, network and internet based distribution lists.	Community Development Communications Customer Service	Disability service providers	2013 2012	
	Ensure Council website continues to comply with the Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)	Continuing initiative	Communications	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Ongoing	People with disabilities screen readers are able to access key council documents via the internet
Ensure people with a disability and their families are able to convey their ideas and concerns to Council	Develop and promote "How to contact Council" postcards to people with a disability, their families and through disability service providers	Development Customer request cards	Community Development Communications Customer Service	Scope	2013	People with a disability and their families will have greater awareness of how to contact Council
	Promote the role of Council to people with a disability	Undertake a range of speaking engagements to promote the role and services offered through Council	Communications Engineering and Environmental Services Community Development	Disability services Community organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability will have greater awareness of the role of Council

Priority Area

Built Environment

Council's commitment to planning for and improving access in the built environment will continue in relation to parks, signage, roads, footpaths, buildings and other facilities such as libraries and leisure centres that fall within Council's responsibility and sphere of influence.

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Universal access principles embedded in all Council planning and building initiatives Universal design means the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed	Universal access principles will be reflected and enacted in Council policies and strategic planning	Implementation of the Play Space Strategy and the Open Space Strategy Capital Works implementation Regulation of building and planning permits Continue to implement Planning Strategies such as the Box Hill Structure Plan and the MegaMile Structure Plans	Building and Planning Capital Works Engineering and Environmental Services Arts and Recreation Development	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability will have greater access to our community
	Utilise universal design principles in planning and design of play spaces to optimise access to play spaces and associated park infrastructure for the whole community	Implementation of the Play space strategy and the Open Space Strategy	Engineering and Environmental Services	Play Australia Community organisations and groups State government departments	Ongoing	Young residents will have access to play spaces
	Through maintenance program continue to ensure that access roads, car parks, footpaths, bike paths and pathways are accessible to people with a disability	Maintenance Program implementation Road Management Plan implementation	City Works Arts and Recreation Development Capital Works Parkswide	Community groups Disability service providers	Ongoing	People with a disability will be able to move safely in our municipality
	Through Capital Works project nomination process prioritise access related requests and actions	Capital Works Program implementation	Capital Works		Ongoing	People with a disability will have increased access to our community and facilities.
	Advocate for a high level of accessibility throughout the municipality in Council's interactions with state and federal departments	Implementation of Council's plans and strategies. Current projects include Mitcham Rd / Rooks Rd Grade Separation	Engineering and Environmental Services Community Development	Federal and state government departments	Ongoing	Whitehorse will have accessible infrastructure

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
All Council developments and redevelopments will strive for enhanced compliance with both the DDA and BCA requirements	Include DDA and BCA compliance requirements on building and planning briefs, tenders and other appropriate documentation	Formation of a cross Council working group	Building and Planning Capital Works	Contractors Consultants	2013 – ongoing	Council facilities will meet the needs of people with a disability in addition to meeting minimum standards
	Continue to audit Council buildings for BCA DDA compliance	Continued action from previous Disability Action Plan	Capital Works	Community organisations and groups	Ongoing	
	Assist community organisations operating in Council facilities to identify and address access issues	Continued Neighbourhood House Partnership	Capital Works Community Development Arts and Recreation Development	Neighbourhood and community houses Seniors groups Community groups and organisations	Ongoing	Council community leased properties will meet DDA and BCA standards
People with a disability will have access to public toilet facilities that meet their needs	Map and promote the availability of existing accessible public toilets within Council facilities, parks, reserves and shopping centres	Accessible facilities mapping project	Community Development Customer Service City Works	Disability service providers	2013	People will be aware of the accessible facilities within Whitehorse
	Work with people with a disability to identify features within accessible toilets that work best and comply with legislation	Undertake an Accessible Toilet Project	Community Development	Disability service providers	2013	Council toilet facilities will better meet the needs of people with a disability
	Investigate opportunities to increase the number hoist and change table facilities available in the municipality	Explore potential funding opportunities Undertake an Accessible Toilet Project	Capital Works Community Development	Disability service providers	2012-2016	Increased availability of hoist and change table facilities available to people with a disability
Promote BCA and DDA compliance requirements to private builders and developers	Promote universal access principles to local businesses	Formation of a cross Council working group to develop BCA and DDA awareness Tip Sheets	Community Development Building and Planning Economic Development	Scope Knox City Council Local businesses Whitehorse Business Network TAFE and education providers	2013	People with a disability will have greater access to local businesses
	Include advice on DDA and BCA compliance requirements on building and planning applications and permits	Formation of a cross Council working group to develop BCA and DDA information	Building and Planning		2013	Private builders and developers will be aware of their obligations - reduction in compliance issues
Advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure on major roads and paths of travel	Identify areas where infrastructure improvements are warranted to improve the safety of people with disabilities and advocate for their construction	Continued Implementation of the Whitehorse Road Safety Strategy and Integrated Transport Strategy	Engineering and environmental services	Community organisations Disability service providers Federal and state government departments	Ongoing	People with a disability will have increased confidence in utilising major roads within the municipality
Advocate and work in partnership with Government Departments and private organisations to highlight the access needs of the local community	Advocate for increased accessible transport options within the municipality e.g.: low floor trams and buses	Continued implementation of the Integrated Transport Strategy Continued promotion of Mobility Maps for Box Hill	Engineering and Environmental Services Building and Planning Community Development	Federal and state government departments Disability service organisations	Ongoing	People will have greater opportunity to participate in the community
	Work with VicRoads to promote the need for ramps and lifts at new development and project sites such as train grade separation projects	Current projects include Mitcham Rd / Rooks Rd Grade Separation	Engineering and Environmental Services Community Development	State government departments – Vic Roads	Ongoing	People with a disability will have reduced risk of injury in the event of power outage or emergency evacuation

Priority Area
Employment, training and volunteering

Council will continue to work to understand and address the barriers experienced by people with a disability accessing paid employment, training and volunteering opportunities in relation to opportunities available within Council and in the broader community context.

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Work with local organisations and within Council to promote and provide volunteering opportunities for people with a disability	Ensure Council's volunteering opportunities are inclusive of and promoted to people with a disability	Promote opportunities to participate in the Human Library project. Promotion of the Whitehorse Volunteering Booklet	Community Development Organisational Development	Disability service providers Community organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability will be aware of and participate in Council volunteer opportunities and initiatives
	Work with community organisations to develop volunteering opportunities that are inclusive of and promoted to people with a disability	Continue to facilitate the Volunteer Network HACC to work with Community Development to further promote ways of actively encouraging volunteering within HACC to people with a disability	Community Development HACC	Community organisations Disability service providers	2012	People with a disability will have greater awareness of the range of volunteering opportunities in the community
Provide a range of disability and mental health related training opportunities to staff within Council	Disability and Mental health awareness training will be offered through the annual training calendar	Continue to implement the corporate training calendar	Organisational Development	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Ongoing	Council staff will have greater capacity to respond to the needs and issues facing people with a disability
	Disability and Mental Health related training tailored to specific roles will be promoted and available to Council staff	Continue to implement the corporate training calendar	Organisational Development	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Ongoing	Council Officers have greater capacity to be inclusive of people with a disability in community engagement processes
	Promote inclusive communication strategies across Council Departments	Develop Community Engagement Framework Include communication strategies in the Events and Festival Guide	Community Development			

Objective	Strategy Actions	Known Current/ Planned Initiatives or Projects	Council Department	Partners	Timelines	Anticipated Outcome
Promote the benefits and raise the profile of people with a disability as employees	Promote the services and programs that are available to assist people with a disability in the workforce to local businesses	Develop awareness raising articles for inclusion in WBIZ – Council's Business Publication	Business and Economic Development Community Development	Disability service organisations	2013 Ongoing Sept 2012	Local businesses will have greater knowledge of resources available to support the employment of people with a disability People with a disability will have increase employment opportunities
	In partnership with local businesses, disability and community organisations explore creative initiatives to boost the employment of people with a disability in the local area	Continue to implement the initiatives of the Business Inclusion Group. Host access and inclusion workshops for small businesses	Community Development Business and Economic Development	Scope Knox City Council Local Businesses	2012 -2014	People with a disability will have increase employment opportunities
Council to be seen as an employer of choice by people with a disability	Ensure Council Offices are aware of the services and programs that are available to assist people with a disability in the workforce	Offer training opportunities through the corporate training calendar to raise awareness of services, supports and funding	Organisational Development Community Development	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Ongoing	People with a disability will have increase employment opportunities Council Officers more aware of the services and programs available to support people with a disability in the workplace
	Council to review the Fit for Work policy to incorporate reasonable adjustment provisions that ensure the needs of people with chronic medical conditions and acquired disabilities are met	Develop project working group to undertake review	Organisational Development Community Development	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	2013	People with chronic medical conditions and or acquired disabilities are supported in the workplace
	Continue to review position descriptions annually to ensure legislative compliance	Continue to implement Human Resource procedures	Organisational Development Department Managers	Key stakeholders from public and private organisations	Annually	Position descriptions will reflect legislative obligations
	Position descriptions to be available in accessible formats ie: Easy English and languages other than English on request	Continue to implement the Diversity Policy and Action Plan.	Organisational Development Community Development Communications	Translation services Scope	2015	Employees with literacy challenges will have greater access to information regarding their role
	Corporate policies to be available in accessible formats ie: Easy English and languages other than English	Develop project working group	Organisational Development Communications	Scope Translation services	2012-2016	Employees will have greater opportunities to understand the parameters and benefits contained in Council policies

Implementation

In partnership with the broader community, local organisations and government bodies Council will support the implementation of initiatives and projects emerging from this Plan.

Relevant Council Officers are responsible for the implementation of this Plan. Council Managers and Coordinators will have an ongoing role in developing and evaluating projects and delivering services in a manner that is reflective of both this Plan and Council legislative obligations.

The Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee assists Council to monitor and review the implementation of this Plan.

Evaluation

Evaluation is seen as a continual process throughout the life of the Plan. It is anticipated that all projects and initiatives undertaken by Council Officers emerging from or influenced by this Plan will be evaluated in relation to their outcomes and impacts on the lives of people with a disability.

With the assistance of the Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee, Council Officers will conduct an annual review on the outcomes and achievements. Council will report on the outcomes of this Plan through the Annual Report, in line with the requirements of the *Disability Act 2006*.

In addition a final evaluation at the completion of this Plan will be undertaken to document achievements, strengths and opportunities for future plans.

Community Development will take the lead role in communicating the outcomes of the Plan throughout Council and the community.

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Appendix 1
Community Survey

The development of the Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan assists Council to understand the aspirations, interests and needs of people with a disability who are living, learning, playing, work and visiting the municipality. The Plan demonstrates Council's ongoing commitment to serve and strengthen our diverse community to be inclusive, vibrant and engaged.

The information collected will inform Council's directions and partnership opportunities for the next four years.

Council has a responsibility under Section 38 of the Disability Act (2006) to develop a Disability Action Plan for the purpose of:

a) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities

b) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment

c) Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability

d) Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

To ensure the best outcomes for people with a disability, it is imperative for Council to hear the perspectives of people with a disability, their families and supporters, community based services as well as the general public.

To achieve this we ask that you complete the following survey.

About You

This part of the survey asks some general questions about you.

1. Are you:

- Male
- Female

2. How old are you?

- 8- 12 years
- 13 -17 years
- 18- 24 years
- 25 -29 years
- 30 -39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 -59 years
- 60 -69 years
- 70 -79 years
- Over 80 years

3. What suburb do you live in:

- Blackburn
- Blackburn North
- Blackburn South
- Box Hill
- Box Hill North
- Box Hill South
- Burwood
- Burwood East
- Forest Hill
- Mitcham
- Mont Albert
- Mont Albert North
- Nunawading
- Surrey Hills
- Vermont
- Vermont South
- Other _____

4. Which of the following best describes you:

- Person with a disability
- Parent or family member of a person with a disability
- Resident or community member
- Disability service provider representative
- Community organisation representative
- Business representative
- Other (please specify): _____

5. If you are a person with a disability which of the following best describes your disability

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Acquired brain injury
- Sensory
- Cognitive
- Psychiatric / mental health
- Chronic medical condition
- Other (please specify): _____

Your Thoughts

Information collected from you in this part of the survey relates to your understanding, experiences and opinions. -

6. What do you like about the City of Whitehorse?

7. Based on your understanding what do you believe are the issues facing people with a disability in the community?

8. What would need to exist in the community for people with a disability to feel respected and valued?

City of Whitehorse
Disability Policy and Action Plan
2013 - 2017

8. What would need to exist in the community for people with a disability to feel respected and valued?

9. What changes would you make so that people with a disability can participate in the life of the community?

10. What do you believe would make Whitehorse a great place to live, learn, work, play and visit if you were a person with a disability?

11. What do you believe would make Whitehorse a great place to live, learn, work, play and visit if you were a family member or carer?

Please answer this question if you represent an organisation or business.

12. To increasing the opportunities for people with a disability to participate in the community would your organisation or business be open to exploring any of the following:

- Potential partnerships with Council and or other organisations
- Training and employment of people with a disabilities
- Disability related professional development of organisation or business staff
- Developing new initiatives, programs or services
- Other (please specify): _____

13. Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make?

14. As the Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan is developed would you like to be informed of the opportunities to provide further feedback?

- I would like to be advised when the Draft Plan is released for public comment
- I would like to be advised of other Council initiatives relating to people with a disability.
- No

Please provide your contract details to enable us to provide information as requested

City of Whitehorse
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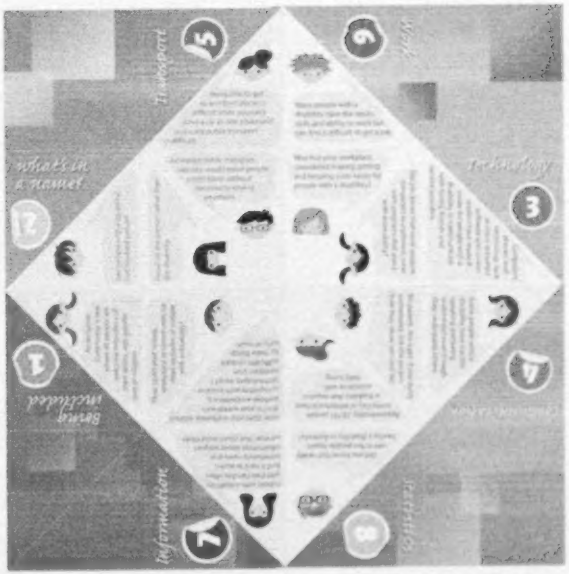
Appendix 2
Chatterbox



Appendix 3
Internal Survey

Dear

Attached is a "Chatterbox" whose aim is to get people talking about "disability" and to raise awareness of some of the issues that people with a disability encounter.

The "Chatterbox" is being given to each person who works for Whitehorse City Council and will also be given out at the Spring Festival.

Council's Community Development is developing the Whitehorse Disability Policy and Action Plan 2012-2016 and we would like you to contribute to its priorities and future directions.

We would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions and return them to Maureen D'Arcy – MetroAccess Development Officer.

Disability Policy and Action Plan – Chatterbox Survey

What do believe Council does well in relation to working with or supporting people with a disability (This doesn't have to be a big thing – small things are equally as valuable)?

What do you believe could be improved to ensure that people with a disability are considered in your work practice and in the community?

What changes would you make so that people with a disability can participate more in the life of the community?